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**Testimony of  
 Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
 Submitted to the  
 Education Committee  
 March 2, 2016**

**Re: S.B. 112, AN ACT PROVIDING CHILD CARE FOR ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS  
 ENROLLED IN APPROVED HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS.**

Senators Slossberg and Boucher, Representatives Fleischmann and Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) **in support of S.B. 112 An Act Providing Child Care for Assistance Recipients in Approved Higher Education Programs.**

This bill would expand the Care4Kids child care subsidy program to parents receiving Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) benefits who are pursuing a degree at two or four-year colleges or universities. In other words, parents who are attempting to achieve economic self-sufficiency for themselves and their families through higher education would have access to child care while pursuing those goals.

Education is key to women's economic security and overall well-being. Connecticut ranks fifth in the nation for its share of women with a bachelor's degree or higher,<sup>i</sup> however, education level varies considerably especially across racial and ethnic groups. For instance, while white and Asian American women in Connecticut have relatively high levels of education (39.6% and 57.9% respectively of hold a bachelor's degree or higher), less than one in five black and Hispanic women holds a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>ii</sup> Adults with higher levels of education consistently earn more than those with lower levels and are less likely to live in poverty.<sup>iii</sup> In Connecticut, as in the nation as a whole, women with a bachelor's degree or higher earn nearly twice the amount that women with a high school diploma earn.<sup>iv</sup>

Furthermore, nearly 20% of employed women in Connecticut work in service occupations, which are the lowest paid occupations for women and have a gender wage gap that is higher than the overall state wage gap.<sup>v</sup> Women employed in the Computer, Engineering and Science occupational group, which generally requires a higher level of education, earn more than twice what women employed in service occupations earn,<sup>vi</sup> and these occupations generally have a narrower gender wage gap.<sup>vii</sup>

While educational attainment does result in higher earnings for women, it is important to note that the wage gap between women and men's earnings is still present regardless of educational attainment. In fact, the median annual earnings for women in the state with a high school diploma or the equivalent are equal to those of men with less than a high school diploma. And, for Connecticut women with a bachelor's degree or higher, they earn 72.2% less than their male counterparts.<sup>viii</sup> These data indicate that

women's access to better paying jobs in Connecticut and the nation overall depends more on educational qualifications than men's access to them does.

By allowing women receiving TFA access to childcare while pursuing higher educational goals, we remove a significant barrier to achievement of those goals, and help to put those women on a path to higher earnings and economic self-sufficiency.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this forward-thinking policy.

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<sup>i</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research. The Status of Women in the States 2015. September 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research and PCSW. The Status of Women in Connecticut's Workforce. 2014.

<sup>iii</sup> Gornick, Janet C. and Markus Jantti. "Women, Poverty, and Social Policy Regimes: A Cross-National Perspective." Report #B258. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. 2010.

<sup>iv</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research and PCSW. The Status of Women in Connecticut's Workforce. 2014.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> The Gender Wage Gap Task Force. The Gender Wage Gap in Connecticut: Findings and Recommendations. November 7, 2013.

<sup>viii</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research and PCSW. The Status of Women in Connecticut's Workforce. 2014.